

Message Text

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15

ACTION EA-14

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FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2295

INFO AMCONSUL BRISBANE BY POUCH

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL PERTH BY POUCH

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, AS

SUBJECT: MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS AT END OF FIRST DAY
OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CONFERENCE

1. FOR MANY MONTHS LABATT HAS FELT THAT AUSTRALIA'S INDUSTRIAL PROBLEMS WILL REMAIN UNSOLVED UNTIL MADE SUBJECT OF NATIONAL MANPOWER CONFERENCE, PREFERABLY ASSEMBLED ON NON-POLITICAL BASIS AND NOT IN CRISIS SITUATION. DURING INFORMAL DISCUSSION AUGUST 2 WITH ACTU PRESIDENT BOB HAWKE AND ATTENDED BY CONGEN BRAND, LABATT SUGGESTED TO HAWKE THAT IF CURRENT CONFERENCE ACHIEVED NOTHING ELSE, IT MIGHT PROFITABLY, ON ITS OWN INITIATIVE, DECIDE TO HOLD SUCH A CONFERENCE ON BROADER TERMS OF REFERENCE THAN THOSE GOVERNING MEETING WHICH THEY ARE NOW ATTENDING.

2. IMPORTANT STEP IN THIS DIRECTION WAS ARRIVED AT DURING FIRST DAY OF CONFERENCE UNDER CHAIRMANSHIP OF CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION COMMISSION PRESIDENT JUSTICE JOHN MOORE. CONFEREES HAVE DECIDED TO
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CONSTITUTE A TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE OF UNIONS, EMPLOYERS,

AND GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE TO CONSIDER, FOR SOME WEEKS AFTER CURRENT CONFERENCE, THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW APPROACH TO WHOLE QUESTION OF INDEXATION. THIS WOULD BE USED ULTIMATELY TO PROVIDE A BASIS FOR PRIMA-FACIE ADJUSTMENTS OF WAGES AND SALARIES TO PRICES AT REGULAR INTERVALS. MR. JUSTICE MOORE STATED AUGUST 7 THAT "THE UNIONS, THE EMPLOYERS AND GOA HAVE AGREED TO MEET SOON TO DISCUSS ATTEMPT TO REACH AGREEMENT" ON SEVERAL ISSUES.

3. IT IS APPARENT FROM JUSTICE MOORE'S STATEMENT THAT CONFEREES DID NOT FIND THEIR POSITIONS AS FAR APART AS THEY HAD ANTICIPATED, AND THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT EMPLOYERS AND UNION GROUPS, AT LEAST, ARE WILLING TO CONSIDER MODIFICATIONS IN THEIR PRE-CONFERENCE POSITIONS. ALSO EVIDENT, THAT MOST RELUCTANT AND ADAMANT OF CONFEREES IS GOVERNMENT DELEGATION HEADED BY SECRETARY OF LABOR IAN SHARP, DEVOTED SPOKESMAN FOR MIN LABOR CAMERON, WHO IS STILL HOLDING OUT FOR MORE EGALITARIAN APPROACH TO WAGE INCREASES, BASED ON PRICE INDEXES.

4. COMMENT: LABATT BELIEVES THAT TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE, SELF-MOTIVATED AND GOING BEYOND LIMITED PURPOSE OF CURRENT CONFERENCE, MAY ACHIEVE MORE BROAD RESULTS THAN CAMERON INTENDED. SETTING UP OF COMMITTEE IS OBVIOUS REACTION BY EMPLOYERS AND UNIONS TO RESIST POLITICIZATION OF CONFERENCE WHICH MIN LABOR ATTEMPTED TO IMPOSE IN PRE-CONFERENCE STATEMENTS. WHILE CONSIDERATION OF LONG-RANGE PLANS OPTIMALLY SHOULD NOT TAKE PLACE UNDER COMPULSION OF CRISIS, CURRENT SITUATION HAS HAD FORTUNATE EFFECT. OF FORCING CONFEREES TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT BOTH SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM ASPECTS OF POLICIES THEY ARE ABOUT TO RECOMMEND. ALL IN ALL LABATT FEELS CONFEREES ARE DEMONSTRATING HIGHER DEGREE OF RESPONSIBILITY THAN MINISTER OF LABOR'S CONDUCT DESERVES.

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BRAND

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